

# THE EUROPEAN DISEASE

## Irrational anti-Americanism takes root across the Atlantic

By Joshua Muravchik

In response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, German chancellor Gerhard Schröder promised “unlimited solidarity” with the United States. A year later, he won a second term by pledging to German voters his unconditional refusal to cooperate with America’s war against terrorism.

When the World Trade towers crumbled, France’s *Le Monde* proclaimed in a banner headline, “We are all Americans.” On the anniversary, the author of those words—French commentator Jean-Marie Colombani—offered a revision: “We have all become anti-Americans.”

The moment at which Europe’s solidarity with the United States evaporated came just four months after September 11, when the Pentagon released photos of al-Qaeda prisoners handcuffed and blindfolded as they arrived at a makeshift U.S. prison in Guantanamo. “Tortured,” screamed the headline of the London *Mail*. America was slaking its “thirst for revenge,” intoned Germany’s *Der Spiegel*. Spain’s *El Mundo* said Guantanamo reminded it “of the torture centers in Eastern Europe during the Cold War.” And former Anglican envoy Terry Waite, invoking his five years of mistreatment at the hands of Islamic fundamentalists in Lebanon, declaimed: “I can recognize the conditions that prisoners are being kept in at Guantanamo Bay because I have been there.”

London *Evening Standard* columnist A. N. Wilson argued that, “These stories and pictures horrify us, but they should not surprise us.” After all, “the Bush administration...are the most merciless exponents of world capitalism, with the determination to have a McDonald’s and a Starbucks...in every country on earth.” (And how better to spread restaurant franchises than by torturing Arabs in Cuba?) The Guantanamo photos, in short, inspired Europe to revert to the hostility toward America that had prevailed for a decade. The outpouring of empathy inspired by the collapse of New York’s Twin Towers had only *seemed* to change all that.

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is burned in  
ie’s Olympic Stadium, 1999.

AP Photo/Pino Lepri

It quickly turned out that the prisoners in the photograph were only shackled and blindfolded because they were being transported. When delegations from the Red Cross and the French and British governments visited Guantanamo, they discovered that the detainees “had absolutely no complaints about mistreatment at all.” Yet even after learning that the tales of mistreatment were false, the European parliament adopted a resolution gratuitously calling on the U.S. “to guarantee humane treatment for all detainees...and respect for international humanitarian law and human rights norms and principles.” Moreover, the oft-repeated complaint that the U.S. was flouting the Geneva convention ignored both the letter and the spirit of that treaty. It allowed many different kinds of fighters to be considered POWs, including guerrillas, provided that they carry arms openly and “conduct...their operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war.” No Archimedean lever could shoehorn al-Qaeda into this definition since the group’s very *raison d’être* was to erase the most fundamental law of war, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants.

Giving the Guantanamo detainees POW status to which they were not entitled would have barred the U.S. from asking them anything other than their names, ranks, and serial numbers, thereby denying America a vital trove of information about future terror plans and operations. (This, while many Europeans were trying to dissuade the U.S. from military action on the grounds that “intelligence” offered better hope of defeating the terrorists.)

Shortly after the September 11 attacks, the American ambassador to the European Union had suggested that “this will drive the U.S. and the E.U. together.... Our common values will take precedence over...the lesser issues on which we have been concentrating in the last couple of years.” But this turned out to be an American pipe dream. Once the Taliban was overthrown and al-Qaeda roused from the caves of Tora Bora, America had gotten its pound of flesh, so far as Europe was concerned. Any measures beyond this would show that it was not the terrorists but *America* that constituted the real “threat to world peace,” as South Africa’s Nelson Mandela put it.

President Bush had been reviled in Europe from the moment he took office. He was a “serial killer,” in the words of French education minister Jack Lang (a reference to executions in Texas while Bush was governor). Italy’s *La Repubblica* sniffed that “Texas’s ‘eternal youngster’” needed to learn “that the world is not his family ranch, full of mustangs to tame with America’s lasso.”

But if Bush epitomized many of the American traits that European elites hate, he was not the source of the transatlantic split. The 1990s were marked by recurrent expressions of European enmity from the trashing of McDonald’s to false accusations of industrial espionage by the CIA to Europe’s impassioned campaign against capital punishment in America (Italian

cities each “adopted” a death row inmate in Texas). When a gun discharged in a French high school in 1998, ending the life of one of the boys who was playing with it, the French minister of education rushed to the press to denounce the real culprit: America, which he said had contaminated France with its “civilization of violence” spread through movies. When French investigative journalists unearthed evidence of their government’s complicity with the genocidal regime in Rwanda, French state officials hinted that the CIA had planted these stories as part of an American plot to supplant French influence in Africa. (Everyone knows how much Americans have lusted for a deeper role in Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, and Burundi.)

Many of the European complaints seemed disingenuous. During debates over enlargement of NATO by including newly free Iron Curtain countries, our European allies wanted the U.S. to pledge never to use force without the authorization of the U.N. Security Council. This contradicted the U.N. Charter itself, which reserves to each state an “inherent right of individual or collective self-defense.” Indeed, no sooner had the Europeans made their clamor over this issue than they joined in war against the Serbs over Kosovo, a war that enjoyed neither the blessing of the Security Council nor any basis in international law.

## Fully two thirds of European elites say it is “good for the U.S. to be vulnerable.”

The real motive behind the misplaced demand for Security Council approval, explained London’s *Daily Telegraph*, was “fears in European governments [of] Alliance members tagging along behind American-led foreign-policy initiatives.” In other words, the same allies who today are making a fuss about the possibility that America would act “unilaterally” without them, were complaining just a few years ago about the prospect that America would act with them. Likewise, current complaints about American globalism were preceded in the early Bush months by hand-wringing over American “isolationism.” In short, the recent message to America from her European allies has been: damned if you do, and damned if you don’t.

It is similarly hard to take seriously European indignation over the death penalty. Most European governments themselves only abolished the practice in the 1970s, ’80s, and ’90s, and public opinion surveys show that most of their citizens (if not the elites) continue to favor capital punishment. In any case, it is impossible to understand how executions in the United States rank as an important international human rights concern in a world rife with torture, concentration camps, extra-judicial



executions, slavery, the treatment of women as property, and many other depredations of tyranny.

Perhaps the European obsession with American executions was prompted by a categorical sense of the sanctity of human life. But if so, how to explain Holland's legalization of euthanasia or the permissive abortion laws in several E.U. states? Then consider France and Britain's *realpolitik* tilt in favor of the Serbs while they murdered hundreds of thousands of Bosnians; Belgium's acquiescence and France's ambiguous role in the genocide in Rwanda; or Paris's diplomatic support for Iraq despite Saddam Hussein's well-documented use of chemical weapons to kill thousands of Iraqi Kurds. What kind of moral sensitivity is pierced by the execution of violent convicts (the death of Timothy McVeigh was "sad, pathetic, and wrong," pronounced the Council of Europe) but little moved by the slaughter of innocents? If it is capital punishment itself that is somehow unbearable to contemplate, why Europe's refusal to sponsor resolutions critical of China in the U.N. Human Rights Commission? China executes as many prisoners every week as America does in a year.

Something other than humanitarian conviction was driving the European campaign against capital punishment in the U.S. The issue had become, said Italian president Carlo Ciampi in 2000, "a most eloquent signal affirming a European identity." It was, as Jean-Claude Casanova put it in *Le Monde*, a touchstone of Europe's sense of "supériorité morale."

Ironically, September 11 gave Europeans a more genuine way to demonstrate their moral qualities by rising above petty jealousies to lock arms with America against a common threat. After the first few hopeful signs, however, many Europeans failed this test. In France, *September 11: The Horrifying Fraud*, a book alleging that the attacks were not carried about by foreigners but by right-wingers within the U.S. government, became, as the *Times* of London reported, "an overnight sensation, rocketing to the top of the charts and breaking the national record for first-month sales held by Madonna's *Sex*."

Nor was the mood much kinder to the U.S. even in England, whose Prime Minister made himself America's staunchest ally. The novelist Salman Rushdie, a man of the Left rarely accused of pro-American bias, was moved to write: "Night after night, I have found myself listening to Londoners' diatribes against the sheer weirdness of the American citizenry. The [9/11] attacks on America are routinely discounted. ('Americans care only about their own dead.') American patriotism, obesity, emotionality, self-centeredness: These are the crucial issues."

While many Europeans felt genuine sympathy for America for the wound it had suffered, most, according to a poll commissioned by the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, believed that it was caused in part by U.S. foreign policy. Fully two thirds of the sample of European elites questioned by the Pew Research Center said their countrymen feel it is "good for the U.S. to be vulnerable."

What about today's opposition to America's anticipated war with Iraq? That in itself is not tantamount to anti-Americanism. Yet there is something fishy about Europe's stance. German foreign minister Joschka Fischer insists that instead of using force, the "sanctions regime" against Iraq should be "further developed." Yet for years, European leaders have been pushing for easing or eliminating those very sanctions. Likewise, Gerhard Schröder first said he would not support the use of military power without the authorization of the U.N. Security Council. Then, as the U.S. drew close to securing such authorization, Schröder pushed back the goal posts and said he would not support military action even *with* U.N. support. In short, Europe's proposals for dealing with Iraq seemed designed less to force change in Baghdad than to foment paralysis in Washington.

Europe's slipperiness on Middle East policy can also be seen in the case of Iran. A number of Europeans have argued that Iraq is the wrong target because it is relatively low on the list of state sponsors of terrorism. This might have been a strong argument had it been followed to its logical conclusion, namely, to focus the anti-terror campaign on the likes of Syria, Lebanon, and above all Iran. The Tehran regime—whose proclaimed "basic motto" is "death to America"—has done much over two decades to spread a way of thinking throughout the Muslim world of which September 11 was a logical culmination. There is, moreover, no denying Tehran's own terrorist activities in many venues including Europe. Iranian agents are suspected in murderous attacks in France, Germany, Italy, England, Norway, Turkey, and Switzerland, as well as the United States. Yet Europe's current prescription for Iran is to remove sanctions entirely.

This June, just as mounting street demonstrations and government repression made it clear that much of the Iranian public has lost patience with the Islamic Republic, the E.U. announced a new drive to expand commerce with the Tehran regime. Trade with Iran "has enormous potential in view of the country's rich endowments of petroleum, natural gas, and minerals, as well as agricultural wealth and industrial potential," burred the European Commission. While a new E.U.-Iranian trade agreement eventually stalled over political conditions, Germany pushed ahead in August with its own investment pact with Tehran. "Even at a time when there are some doubts in the region, E.U. countries like Germany stick to their policy of boosting bilateral ties," crowed German economics minister Werner Müller. No scruples about terrorism were mentioned. Remind me again, is it America or Europe that represents amoral capitalism?

Apart from its contradictory proposals for dealing with Iran and Iraq, Europe's other strategy for the war against terrorism is to "eradicate the breeding ground for potential terrorism," as European Commission ambassador Günter Burghardt put it. This "breeding ground" is defined neither as the hate-spewing theocracy of Iran nor the network of mosques and *madrassas* where radical Islam is propagated, but rather *poverty*, which is

said to incite Middle Easterners to become terrorists by the thousands. Quite apart from the fact that the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks were men of comfortable means, the E.U. has already demonstrated the futility of this sort of thinking through its funnelling of 3.5 billion euros to the Palestinian Authority since 1994. That makes "Palestine" the world's leading per capita recipient of foreign aid, yet far from abating, Palestinian terror had crescendoed amidst this largesse.

Europe's approach to "battling" terrorism is so hollow and self-contradictory as to suggest that its real goal is to tie the hands of the United States. Europeans seem to feel more threatened by their superpower ally than by bombmakers. The *New York Times* recently quoted a Parisian scholar specializing in the U.S. who complained that "America has no more enemy. It does what it likes now when it wants. Through NATO it directs European affairs. Before we could say we were on America's side. Now there is no counterbalance."

In a like vein, *Der Spiegel* lamented (back during the Clinton years) that "Americans are acting, in the absence of limits put on them by anybody or anything, as if they own a blank check in their 'McWorld.'" Dominique Moisi, the head of France's leading institute of international affairs, commented recently that European hostility is aimed not at what America does, but at "what America is." But what is America that is so offensive—except a superpower that casts Europe's weakness into high relief?

The German Marshall Fund/Chicago CFR survey asked Europeans whether they would like the E.U. to become a superpower like the United States; 65 percent said yes and 14 percent said no. (Among the French, a whopping 91 percent said yes and only 3 percent no.) But only about half of those who said "yes" were willing to increase defense spending to make it happen. Remarkably, nine out of ten said their goal was to be an equal partner with the U.S., not a competitor. In other words, they are not afraid of America; rather they are wounded in their pride by the vast disparity between their successes and ours.

The quest to salvage pride also underlies Europe's adoption of a common currency. The goal, said former French prime minister Lionel Jospin, was to "enable Europe to regain its sovereignty...to rebalance the big power blocs." Likewise, Germany's former chancellor Helmut Schmidt predicted with satisfaction that the euro "will change the whole world situation so that the United States can no longer call all the shots." For French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine, the euro was just a first step. "The entire foreign policy of France," he declared, "is aimed at making the



world of tomorrow composed of several poles, not just a single one." That makes America foreign policy enemy number one.

Is America a selfish rogue state, as some Europeans have claimed? The U.S. war on terrorism is of course motivated by self-defense, but also by a broad concern for world order. Our determination to take down Saddam Hussein, for which we have been so much criticized on the other side of the Atlantic, is especially public spirited. If Washington were truly selfish, it could strike an easy deal with Saddam: Do what you want in your region, just don't mess with us. That is a deal Saddam would surely take. And he would be happy to sell us oil to fund his local tyranny. But it is a deal America will never offer.

The countries for whom the sole polestar is self-interest are the French and the Russians, whose resistance to war against Iraq flows from their own commercial and diplomatic interests, global security be damned. The same pattern of unprincipled selfishness, and sycophancy toward the world's oil-rich Muslim states, led six out of nine E.U. members on the U.N. Human Rights Commission to vote for a resolution this spring that endorsed suicide bombings as a legitimate form of struggle.

It is also selfishness that lies at the root of Europe's weakness. Collectively, the E.U. states are as wealthy and more populous than the United States. They are potentially more powerful—if they are willing to pay the price of subsuming national egos, trimming welfare states, and bearing risks and burdens far from home. But rather than strive for the best in themselves, many Europeans prefer to wallow in resentment. Meanwhile, America goes about the dirty business of making the world safer—for itself, and for them.

# A GERMAN-AMERICAN REQUIEM

By Karina Rollins



"Peace for the World, Pretzels for Bush" (referring to the incident where President Bush choked into unconsciousness). So reads a banner on a Berlin tower in May 2002.

There was nothing like the great German-American romance. Just ask all those American soldiers who came to Germany as victors over the greatest evil in history, and stayed to become the German people's most devoted friends. (Not to mention husbands to countless German girls.)

Pictures of hordes of children crowded around GIs handing out candy are among Germany's most famous post-war images. Everything that was American was exciting, new, and cool. It was an American President who told Berliners that he was one of them. By 1963 the Cold War was at a deep freeze and U.S. troop levels in Germany were at 254,000. American military families had crossed the Atlantic en masse, bringing American schools and shopping centers with them. By the mid 1960s it was hard to go anywhere in middle or southern Germany without running into an "Ami"—the sometimes derogatory, mostly affectionate, term Germans use to refer to Americans.

By the time I—the result of one of those countless German-Ami unions—went from kindergarten through fifth grade at

one of those American schools in the '70s, a Germany without Americans was unimaginable. U.S. installations were everywhere; autobahns sported signs for U.S. Army posts, air bases, commissaries, and gas stations. During military training exercises, German roads hosted convoys of camouflaged U.S. trucks and tanks, and Germans and Amis waved at each other. When I went out for dinner at German restaurants with my parents, my father was rarely the only American in the place. On most any road you would see the green license plates (later changed to white) with the "USA" stickers go sailing by.

I celebrated the Fourth of July on U.S. Army posts, which opened to the public and attracted hordes of German revelers. German carnivals and fairs drew crowds of Americans, and there was always happy intermingling. Krauts and Amis co-hosted German-American Friendship Day celebrations, where Germans ordered hamburgers and Americans ate bratwurst, and the lapel pins with the U.S. and German flags were the most common sight.

The idea that this might ever change never occurred to me.

When I was in college in the U.S., the Berlin Wall fell, the Evil Empire crumbled, and within a few years, the number of American troops in Germany plummeted to fewer than 50,000 (currently back up to 70,000). One American installation after another was closed down and handed back to the Germans. The world had become safer, but also a bit sadder. Today, an American license plate on the autobahn is the exception. At German celebrations, there are often only Germans. The Germans had incorporated so much of Ami life into their own that concern about losing their favorite radio station—AFN (the U.S. Armed Forces Network)—became a mass worry.

Despite the massive troop withdrawal, the love affair continued. It was evident in Germany's stirring 9/11 response: Church bells rang simultaneously across the country; "We are all New Yorkers," proclaimed chancellor Gerhard Schröder; teenagers

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